

Rules of the Game

Making Magic Items (Part Three)

By Skip Williams



Now that we've examined scroll and potion creation, we can consider some slightly more complicated items -- wands and staves.

Creating Wands

Wands aren't very complex items; they simply store a single spell 50 times. For game purposes, a wand is something like 50 identical scrolls, each waiting to be triggered one at a time. A spell stored in a wand must be 4th level or less, but it can be any kind of spell.

Prerequisites: To make any wand, you need the Craft Wand item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 5th as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have prepared the spell to be stored in the wand (or must know the spell, in the case of a sorcerer or bard). Also see the notes on caster level.

Caster Level: A character creating a wand can set the caster level for the wand at any level from the minimum level that character would have to be to cast the spell up to that character's caster level when casting that spell. For example, a 10th-level wizard creates a wand of *fireball*. *Fireball* is a 3rd-level spell for a wizard, and a wizard must be at least 5th level to cast it, so the wizard in this example must create the wand with a caster level of at least 5th. Since the example wizard is 10th level, the wand can't have a caster level higher than 10th.

Equipment and Materials: Making a wand requires a wand and assorted oddities that serve to focus magic into to the wand and hold it there. Such items might include prisms, expensive inlays for the wand itself, powders to treat the wand, and other sundries that are either consumed in the wand-making process or incorporated into the wand.

Base Price: You can look up base prices for most wands in Chapter 7 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but I find it easier to use the formula for spell trigger items with 50 charges from Table 7-33 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*: spell level x caster level x 750 gp.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a wand is half the base price, plus 50 times the cost for any expensive material component the spell requires (just as with a scroll, except that you must pay the cost 50 times for the wand's 50 charges).

The experience cost to create a wand is 1/25th the base price, plus 50 times any experience component the spell stored in the wand has.

Market Price: A wand's market price is its base price, plus 50 times the cost for any expensive material components the spell requires. If the spell in the wand also required an extra XP cost, the market price increases by 5 gp per extra point spent, times 50.

Example Wand Costs: Suppose the 10th-level wizard in our previous examples creates a *wand of fireballs* or a *wand of stoneskin*. The wands' creation costs and market prices would be as follows:

A *wand of fireballs* with a caster level of 5th has a base price of 11,250 gp (3 x 5 x 750). The gp cost to create the wand is 5,625 gp (1/2 the base price of 11,250 gp). The XP cost to create the wand is 450 XP (1/25 the base price of 11,250 gp). The wand's market price is the same as its base price.

A *wand of fireballs* with a caster level of 10th has a base price of 22,500 gp (3 x 10 x 750). The gp cost to create the wand is 11,250 gp (1/2 the base price of 22,500 gp). The XP cost to create the wand is 900 XP (1/25 the base price of 22,500 gp). The wand's market price is the same as its base price.

A *wand of stoneskin* with a caster level of 10th has a base price of 30,000 gp (4 x 10 x 750). The gp cost to create the wand is 27,500 gp (1/2 the base price of 30,000 gp plus 50 times the spell's component cost of 250 gp). The XP cost to create the wand is 1,200 XP (1/25 the base price of 30,000 gp). The wand's market price is 42,500 gp (the base price of 30,000 gp plus 12,500 gp for the expensive material components).

Wand Miscellany: All the prices noted here are for fully charged wands (50 charges). As noted in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, a wand always has 50 charges when created -- it isn't possible to create a wand with less than full charges. A used wand, however, sells for less. To calculate the price, divide the cost of a fully charged wand by 50 and multiply that by the number of charges remaining. For example, a wand of *fireballs* with a caster level of 10th and 32 charges remaining is worth 450 gp per charge remaining, or 14,400 gp.

As noted for scrolls in Part Two, add extra costs for the spell in a wand once for each time the wand can be used, in this case 50 times, not once for each day it takes to make the wand. That is, an extra gold piece cost for a wand is always 50 times the spell's component cost, and an extra XP cost for a spell increases the XP cost to make the wand by 50 times the spell's XP cost. The market price for a wand that stores a spell with an XP component would increase by 50 times the XP cost, times 5 gp.

Creating Staffs

Staff creation is a little trickier to handle than wand creation because a staff stores multiple spells. A staff can hold a spell of any level. A staff holds 50 charges, and activating the staff releases a spell effect and drains one or more charges from the staff.

Prerequisites: To make any staff, you need the Craft Staff item creation feat. (The feat itself has a caster level of 12th as a prerequisite.) The creator also must have prepared the spells to be stored in the staff (or must know the spells, in the case of a sorcerer or bard). A few staffs have other prerequisites; for example, you must have a lawful alignment to craft a *staff of defense*. Also see the notes on caster level.

Caster Level: Setting the caster level for a staff works much like setting the caster level for a wand, but there are a few catches. A staff has one caster level for all the spells it can produce, and that caster must be at least 8th. As with a wand, however, the caster level must be at least as high as the caster level the creator would have to have to cast any of the spells stored in the staff, and no higher than the creator's caster level. For example, suppose a staff can produce several different spell effects, including *sleep* and *mass suggestion*. A 1st-level wizard can cast a *sleep* spell, but no staff has a caster level lower than 8th. In addition, *mass suggestion* is a 6th-level spell for a wizard, so the staff would have to have a caster level of at least 11th.

Equipment and Materials: According to Table 7-32 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, creating a staff requires a masterwork quarterstaff, but the general notes for creating staves on page 287 says the staff cost is subsumed in the cost to make the item. The extra 300 gp for a masterwork quarterstaff does not seem to be included in the staff prices shown on pages 243-245 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you allow magic staves to function as masterwork quarterstaves in your campaign, you should add the masterwork quarterstaff cost to the cost to create the staff (and to its market price).

In any case, making a staff requires the same sorts of esoteric materials required to make a wand.

Base Price: You can determine the base price for a staff in much the same way that you determine a wand's base price, but there are catches here, too. Because each staff's spell effects draw on the same pool of charges, you don't have to pay the full cost for every one of them. Instead, the staff's highest level spell has the full base price (spell level x caster level x 750 gp).

The staff's next highest-level spell costs only 75% of the usual base price (spell level x caster level x 750 gp x 0.75).

All the remaining spells in the staff cost only 50% of the usual base price (spell level x caster level x 750 gp x 0.5).

Further reductions in base price are possible. When a spell requires two or more charges, divide the base price by the number of charges required.

Creation Cost: The monetary cost to create a staff is half the base price, just as with a wand. If a staff stores a spell that has an expensive material component, add the cost of that component, times the maximum number of times the staff could produce that spell. That is 50 divided by the number of charges the spell requires.

The experience cost to create a staff is 1/25th the base price, plus any extra costs for the spells the staff stores. Apply the extra experience cost according to the number of times the staff could produce the spell, as noted previously for costly spell components. If a staff holds two or more spells that incur extra creation costs, apply only the largest extra cost. You use only the highest cost because any charge used up reduces the number of spells left in the staff, even when the spell the staff produces doesn't have an extra cost.

Market Price: A staff's market price is its base price, plus the costs for any expensive material components the spell requires. If any spells in the staff also required an extra XP cost, the market price increases by 5 gp per extra point spent. In both cases, the market price increases according to the number of times the staff could produce the spell that requires either of these elements. If you had two or more spells with extra XP costs or monetary costs, you'd increase the cost to create and market prices for whichever spell you used to set the staff's creation cost (which will be the highest extra cost; see the section on creation costs).

Example Staff Costs: The *staff of frost* from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* has a caster level of 10th and can produce the following spells: *ice storm*, *wall of ice*, and *cone of cold* (2 charges). The staff has a base price of 56,250 gp, which was calculated as follows:

Cone of Cold: 18,750 gp $[(5 \times 10 \times 750) \times 0.5 \text{ for two charges}]$. Since *cone of cold* also is the highest level power, there are no further reductions.

Wall of Ice: 22,500 gp ($[4 \times 10 \times 750] \times 0.75$ because this is the power with the second highest level).

Ice Storm: 15,000 gp ($[4 \times 10 \times 750] \times 0.5$ because this is an additional power).

Adding the base costs for the various powers together gives us our total: 18,750 gp + 22,500 gp + 15,000 gp = 56,250 gp.

The monetary cost to create this staff is half the base price: 28,125 gp.

The experience cost to create this staff is 1/25th the base price: 2,250 XP.

Let's suppose we create a new staff, the *staff of remediation*. We'll give this staff a caster level of 16th, and the following powers: *greater restoration* (2 charges), *atonement* (3 charges), *break enchantment* (2 charges), and *remove curse*. This staff has a base price of 83,498 gp, which was calculated as follows:

Greater restoration: 27,998 gp ($[7 \times 16 \times 750] \times 0.3333$ for three charges and rounded up to the nearest whole gold piece). Since *greater restoration* also is the highest level power, there are no further reductions. The staff can produce 25 *atonement* effects, for an extra experience cost of 12,500 XP. The staff also can produce 16 *greater restoration* effects at an XP cost 8,000, but we use the higher cost for the atonement effects.

Atonement: 22,500 gp ($[5 \times 16 \times 750] \times 0.5$ for two charges and $\times 0.75$ for the power with the second highest level).

Break Enchantment: 15,000 gp ($[5 \times 16 \times 750] \times 0.5$ for two charges and $\times 0.5$ again because this is an additional power).

Remove Curse: 18,000 gp ($[5 \times 16 \times 750] \times 0.5$ because this is also an additional power).

Adding the base costs for the various powers together gives us our total: 27,998 gp + 22,500 gp + 15,000 gp + 18,000 gp = 83,498 gp.

The monetary cost to create this staff is half the base price, 41,749 gp.

The experience cost to create this staff is 1/25th the base price: 3,340 XP (also rounded up). In addition, the *atonement* spell costs the caster 500 XP when used to remove the effects of voluntary actions. Let's assume that an *atonement* spell from the staff can remove the effects of voluntary actions. The staff can produce 25 *atonement* effects, for an extra experience cost of 12,500 XP.

The market price is the base price of 83,498 gp plus 5 times the extra XP cost (62,500), for a total market price of 145,998 gp.

As noted for wands, apply extra costs for a spell's material and XP components once for each time the staff can produce that spell, not once for each day the creator spends working on the staff.

None of the examples presented here include an extra 300 gp for a masterwork quarterstaff. As noted earlier, add this extra cost to the staff's creation cost and market price if you decide to allow magic quarterstaffs to

function as weapons in your campaign.

When pricing a staff, don't worry if several powers have the same level. The highest-level power the staff has is always full price (unless it requires multiple charges). The next highest level power costs only 75% of the basic value, even if it happens to be the same level as whatever power you chose as the highest level power, and all remaining powers are only 50% of the basic price. You can see this concept at work in the price examples presented here.

Staff Miscellany: All the prices noted here are for fully charged staffs (50 charges), just as for wands. You can calculate the market price for a partially charged staff the same way that you calculate the cost for a wand. When a partially charged staff has a power that normally has an extra monetary or XP cost, you must first calculate the staff's base price and then add the extra cost according to the number of times the partially charged staff could produce those effects. For example, if our *staff of remediation* had 24 charges remaining, its new base price would be 1,670 gp (base price divided by 50 and rounded up) times 24, or 40,080 gp. The partially charged staff could produce *atonement* 12 times, which raises the price by 30,000 gp (12 x 500 x 5 gp), for a total market price of 70,080 gp.

The *atonement* spell has a variable XP component. It would be possible to create a *staff of remediation* without the extra cost for the XP component (see the notes on scrolls in Part Two), but, if so, an *atonement* effect from the staff could not remedy the effects of misdeeds.

A Note on Rounding: Normally one rounds **fractions** down to the next highest whole number in the **D&D** game. In the case of magic item prices, it's customary to retain fractional gold pieces when they work out to an even number of silver pieces. So, for example, a cost that works out to 1,251.5 gp would be 1,251 gp, 5 sp, not 1,252 gp.

Also note that when calculating the effects of an extra monetary or experience cost for a charged item, use the number of effects the item actually can produce; you should round down. For example, 50/3 is 16.667 (approximately); however, you can't use fractional charges to create a fractional effect, so a fully charged staff with a power that uses 3 charges can produce that power only 16 times.

What's Next?

Enough about wands and staffs. Next week, we'll look at what's involved in creating magic weapons, armor, and shields.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for 18 years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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